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ABSTRACT

The report describes the planning, organization, and provision of special education in Finnish comprehensive schools (for students from 7 to 16 years old). School officials address the following topics: relationship of special education to overall school reform, curriculum development, the education of the visually and aurally handicapped, numbers of pupils and teachers by type of special education for the school year 1977-1978, alternatives (special school, special class, and clinic placements) to special education, and special education for exceptional small groups (children with cerebral palsy, aural and visual handicaps). (CL)

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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ABOUT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION
IN FINLAND

Editor:
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FOREWORD

Special education in Finland has been provided to children in compulsory school age as follows:

1. In connection with the municipal school system (auxiliary schools, other special schools and classes and individual special education).
2. The education of the aurally and visually handicapped.
3. Special education provided by the social welfare system (ESN-schools, reform schools, schools for multihandicapped children).

The following principles have been applied in arranging special education:

- in each case the regular class placement is to be preferred and such supporting, treatment and rehabilitation measures to be taken as make it possible
- if the regular class placement is not possible, the pupil must without delay be given an opportunity to study in a special class, school or boarding school
- home education should be regarded as the last resort
- educational legislations should be developed so that the municipalities have an absolute obligation to provide each child with suitable basic education.

The present and future development of special education is closely connected with the comprehensive school reform. The old parallel school system is replaced by a 9-year comprehensive school, which covers the age groups 7-16. The reform started in the northern and eastern parts of the country in the school year 1972-73. It will have been introduced in the whole country by 1979-80.

This report deals mainly with special education in the comprehensive school. The development and implementation of special education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the National Board of General Education, the County Departments of Education and the local educational authorities.

This report describes the planning, organization, provision, amount and different organizational solutions of special education in Finnish public education and the teaching of exception groups. Mr Niskanen is the Head of the Special Education Bureau of the National Board of General Education and Mr Jero Chief Inspector in the same bureau.

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APPENDIX 1

THE PLANNING AND PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Elias Niskanen

The planning and organization of special education has been closely connected with the school reform, which has been implemented in Finland since the beginning of the school year 1972-73. The goals and objectives of the school reform are included in the Act on the Principles of Public Education, which was unanimously passed by the Parliament in 1967.

Besides this act the Parliament also carried a motion on the development of special education. The motion was as follows: The Parliament presupposes that with the school reform special schools and classes should take care of the teaching of children, who because of physical or mental illness or handicap cannot follow teaching in a normal class. On the basis of the act as well as the motion special education in Finland can be developed in conformity to the development of the school system as a whole. Generally it can be stated that the school reform and the special education reform take place simultaneously and along the same lines in principle. That is why the development of special education in Finland can follow the main principles of the school reform. According to these principles the school system (and special education) should be developed so that a socially fair, economically and socially equal school is created, which is effective instructionally and so advanced pedagogically that individual differences can be taken into consideration in teaching situations. These general principles of the school reform can also be made the over-all goals of special education.

The main aim in developing the rules and regulations of the comprehensive school has been to make special education as closely an integrated part of the comprehensive school instruction as possible. That is why regulations on mere special education have been included in acts and statutes

only when necessary. This has been done to ascertain the effective integration of special education. These attempts have generally been advantageous to the over-all development of special education. However, certain defects have also been found, but these defects have been amended as people on the various levels of administration have learned to interprete the special education regulations more flexibly.

At the end of the year 1967 the Ministry of Education set up a planning committee on the comprehensive school special education. This committee left its first report in 1970 and its second report in 1971. The reports include detailed proposals for the goals and organizational principles to be followed in the development of special education. Only certain main goals can be mentioned here.

The committee points out the following as regards the development of special education:

With the school reform the concept of special education should be extended and refined. New groups of children should be brought into special education and new, more effective functional forms should be created. On the other hand special education should be developed so that the rehabilitation of exceptional children could be taken better care of than has been the case in earlier years. The child should be the prime concern when planning and carrying out these principles. For instance exemption from compulsory education should be totally abandoned. Instead, each child should be provided with education and rehabilitation corresponding to his individual development level on the basis of research results and expert opinion.

The committee states that special education for exceptional children can best be arranged as an integral part of the school system as follows:

- Each child should primarily be put to a normal school where he should be given such supportive instruction, rehabilitation etc. as would make him able to study in a normal school or class.

- In case this arrangement does not prove sufficient, the pupil should without delay be given a chance to study in a special class, special school or boarding school.
- Home education should be a last resort in case of severely handicapped children.
- Educational legislation should be developed so that the municipality is responsible for arranging suitable basic education to each child.

According to the committee the above main goal implies that special education in Finland in the future aims at increasing the duties and participation of municipalities in special education as well as securing all children a right for education suitable to their needs. Possibilities for integration should also be studied further than has been the case so far.

The committee has also presented some facts on increasing the mental health services of schools, and considers it highly vital to provide schools with school psychologists and school welfare workers. These implementations have an important preventive function as regards special education.

Planning in the field of special education has also been carried out by the Committee for Special Education in the Field of Social Welfare and the Committee for Vocational Special Education. The first mentioned committee has made proposals for special education provided by social welfare workers (ESN-instruction and reform school education). Social welfare workers and school authorities had their representatives in the committee. The committee stated that the concept of compulsory education should be extended so that it covers the entire age group. The organization should follow the principle of normalization as far as possible. Teaching must be arranged within a unified system so that the pupil's individual needs for education are satisfied irrespective of what kind of rehabilitation he needs. Thus, for instance, mildly retarded children should be provided instruction within the compulsory school system in special classes. More seriously retarded pupils should be placed in rehabilitation schools. The

planning and finance of rehabilitation schools should be taken care of by social authorities; the planning, coordination and implementation of instruction should be carried out by school administrators. An act concerning this matter came into force on 1.1.1978 (Act on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped). The act is being put into effect.

The Committee for Vocational Special Education has made proposals for the over-all organization of special education, which would make it possible to arrange the instruction of those having received special education or the like. These proposals will not be dealt with here.

In general, committees and commissions have in their proposals emphasized the various possible forms of special education. There does not exist only one kind of speecial education of exeeptional children requires a great number of different forms of activity and lots of methods, whose planning and carrying out should sufficiently take into consideration the circumstances where the activities are performed.

In its activity and economic plan for the years 1979-83 the National Board of General Education has stated that the work for the development of special education should procede along the following main principles:
Special education should be integrated with general education by means of remedial and concomitant teaching, by effective part-time special education and by teaching pupils in need of special education partly in normal groups. Besides special classroom education, part-time special education should be organized in observation classes and special schools, and in schools for visually and aurally handicapped children. Special education in sparsely populated areas could be improved by creating joint municipal special education teacher posts.

The placing of special education units outside normal schools should be avoided.

In order to provide special education for small groups, such as aurally and visually handicapped children and CP-children, the National Board of General Education proposes large-scale cooperation between the local authorities. The instruction of these pupils in normal groups will be facilitated by means of various remedial measures, e.g. by allowing remedial teaching beyond the established remedial teaching quota (mas. 2 weekly hours per pupil).

The services offered by school psychologists and welfare workers as well as other students' welfare services must also be developed within the field of special education. The aim is to increase the opportunities of special teachers to cooperate with experts in normal education and with welfare workers.

ACTUAL TENDENCES AND THE CONCRETE SITUATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Elias Niskanen

Legislation

The work to reform the administration of special education within the social sector, was completed in 1977. Till then the educational authorities had, as far as the comprehensive school is concerned, been in charge of and responsible for the general education given in the comprehensive school and for the special education relating thereto (special schools, special classes, individual teaching and teaching in small groups within the comprehensive school). On the other hand, the social authorities had been in charge of and developed the education of mentally handicapped children and the education given by schools for maladjusted children as well as that of seriously motor handicapped children.

1.8.1976 a statute concerning special schools for handicapped children came into force. According to this statute, the state establishes and maintains special schools for comprehensive school education, adjustment training, health services and medical rehabilitation for handicapped children and young people.

The general management, control and supervision of these activities rest upon the National Board of General Education, which also conducts and supervises the education in special schools. The statute is gradually being implemented and a private-owned special school in Oulu has already been transferred to the state. The same measures are to be taken regarding a similar school in Helsinki, and a new special school will be built in Kuopio. The above-mentioned special schools are intended for such seriously motor handicapped children that cannot, even with the help of special arrangements, attend general education in comprehensive schools or in special classes.

1.1.1978 the Act on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped came into force. According to paragraph one of this act

> "persons whose development as a result of congenital or childhood disease, deficiency or injury has been retarded or disturbed and who cannot, under the provisions of any other law, receive the services they need, are entitled to special care".

The purpose of special care, according to paragraph one, subsection two, is

> "to assist person as qualified in subsection one to manage in daily life, independently to earn his living and to adjust to society and also to secure him the education as well as the medical and other care he needs".

The management and control of special care, according to paragraph three, rest upon the National Board of Social Welfare under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Nevertheless, the management and supervision of the special training and other education relating to special care, rest upon the National Board of Vocational Education and the National Board of General Education, each in its field of activity, in consultation with the National Board of Social Welfare. In the provinces the management and supervision rests upon the local administration under the guidance of the National Board of General of Education. The provisions for special care rest upon the local federation for a common special care district (§ 6).

The Committee for Special Education in the Field of Social Welfare, where the law originated (committee report 1971:b 98), started from the basic principle that compulsory education should be extended to include all children of school age and that exemption from school attendance should be totally abolished. As to education itself, the committee established that it should constitute part of the general school system that is planned, managed and supervised by the educational authorities. On the other hand, the management of the functional training of the mentally handicapped should remain under the supervision of social authorities.

The new Act on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped is a compromise and contains the possibility to exempt mentally handicapped children from compulsory education (§§ 28-30). This possibility was critisized even in the preparation period, wherefore Parliament when it adopted the law assumed

> "that government will hasten the total renewal of school legislation and that it, when preparing and carrying out the reforms, will also take into consideration the mentally handicapped. Even during the present legislation, goverment should make education as effective as possible and thus have a special curriculum worked out for the mentally handicapped".

A working group for school legislation has participated in the preparation of a total renewal of the school laws. In its argumentations for the bill, the working group states that the essential concrete modification of the bill in relation to the present legislation is that the municipalities are now obliged to arrange education for every child in need of special education, provided that the Act (no 519/77) on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped does not contain provisions to the contrary. For the present, many mentally handicapped children of school age are left outside school education arranged by society as well as school benefits in connection with this education. According to the school law committee, this drawback has been known for a number of years, but not until quite recently were measures taken to redress it. An example of this endeavour is the Act (no 519/77) on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped. According to the general argumentations for this law the mentally handicapped should be able to benefit from the content of the education of the mentally handicapped should rest upon the educational authorities. Only if the subnormality is grave and totally deprives the child the possibility and prerequisites of participating in the education within the normal school system, would the child stay outside this school system. According to the new law, no mentally handicapped child must be left outside the educational school services offered by society, but the education and guidance of there children, as well as their rehabilitation, rests upon the local

federation for the common special care district that provides the special training. After having thus established the basis of the Act on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped, the working group, in the bill, has assumed that the municipality arranges comprehensive school education for all children of school age within its area or provided possibilities for them to receive education corresponding to comprehensive school education. According to the bill, the municipality can fulfil this obligation also with the help of other than municipal schools. Only when the physical or mental development of the child is very retarded, and it is impossible for the child to reach the level of knowledge and practical attainments that the fulfilment of compulsory education presupposes, is the child entitled to receive special training in addition to comprehensive school education.

In paragraph three of the bill, the distribution of the work regarding education is defined as follows:

> "The municipality must arrange comprehensive school education for all children of school age within its district or provide possibilities for them to receive an education corresponding to comprehensive school education (provided that the law (no 519/77) does not contain provisions to the contrary). This duty of the municipality can be fulfilled also in cooperation with other municipalities and by means of utilizing other than municipal schools.
>
> The Cabinet can put two or more municipalities under the obligation to cooperate when arranging comprehensive school education. As to providing special training for a dhild who, as a result of his handicap, cannot utilize the education as specified in subsection one of this Act, the Act (no 519/77) on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped contains regulations concerning this matter".

The working group is likely to continue its work for a long time to come, and it will therefore take a long time before a total renewal in this respect can be achieved.

In october 1977 the Ministry of Education set up a working group for the implementation of the Act on Special Care of the Mentally Handicapped. This work has not been completed yet. The working group has drawn up a proposal for the provision of special training. This proposal relating to the law presently in force, will be given in the near future.

In addition to the above-mentioned renewal work, a reform of the regulations concerning education given in schools for maladjusted children has been prepared. The draft has already been completed, and the statute is likely to be given in the near future. After these administrative measures have been taken, a phase in the total renewal of special education within the social sector can be regarded as completed.

The development of the curriculum

In 1977 the basic material of the instrumental subjects and the foreign languages taught in the comprehensive school, had finally been defined. In connection with the definition and the testing of the basic education material for aurally and visually handicapped children, there has also been an evaluation and adjustment of the experimental plans. The aim has been to precice the central content of the education thus that the curriculum and the time available could be better balanced. The adjustment work has continued for a number of years. A working group set up by the National Board of General Education has been in charge of these activities, and all teachers of aurally and visually handicapped children have participated in this work.

The corresponding work for the development of the curriculum of the classes for mentally retarded has also been started. In addition, classless education has been introduced into the third school year in schools for these children. One of the purposes of this experiment is to develop a suitable curriculum.

Through the National Board of Social Welfare, in consultation with the University of Jyväskylä, an adjustment and development of the curriculum for the mentally handicapped is being worked out. The development has closely followed the analyses in

this field. As a result of this work six subreports have been published in the publication series of the Institution for Special Education of the University of Jyväskylä. There is a continuing development of the curriculum on the basis of the above-mentioned analysis. The work has been led by a working group set up by the National Board of Social Welfare.

Special education in the comprehensive school

During the school year 1977-78 about 87.000 pupils obtained special education within the comprehesive school. This means 13.4 per cent of the whole age group (about 650.000) within the basic level education. Special classroom education was given to about 1,5 per cent of the comprehensive school pupils, while individual education and education in small groups was given to about 11,9 per cent of the pupils. The ratio of special education teachers in that year was 1932.

In its five-year-plan, the National Board of General Education presupposes that the planning period be used to integrate special education with normal education by means of remedial teaching, coordinated education as well as by means of effective part-time special education and by teaching pupils in special classes in normal groups when possible. Besides special classroom education, efforts should be made to organize fulltime education in observation classes and special schools as well as part-time education in schools for visually and aurally handicapped children. In sparsely populated areas it is possible to establish municipal general special teacher posts for classless tuition. The increase in special education in sparsely populated areas means that class teachers have to participate in special education more than here to fore. Specialized class teachers can in their own school be put in charge of the education of children with reading and writing disabilities and children with speech defects.

Normal class education of visually, aurally or orthopedically gravely handicapped children must be supported in such a way that those in need of remedial instruction receive 2 weekly hours of remedial teaching by special authorization beyond the established remedial teaching quota.

Special education units should not be located far from normal school units. Efforts should be made to improve the opportunities for special teachers to cooperate with experts in normal education and with school welfare workers. All these measures aim at integrating the various forms of special education with normal education.

The education of the visually and aurally handicapped

The distribution of the work between the state and the local authorities concerning the education of the visually and aurally handicapped has been developed further. In the school year 1977-78 two new schools have been founded for aurally handicapped children. During this year there were 13 municipal schools for the aurally handicapped and four boarding schools run by the state, one of which was Swedish. The number of pupils in the municipal schools was 370, in those run by the state 240.

In Finland there are two special schools for the visually handicapped, one of which is for Swedish-speaking children. The total number of pupils in these schools is 110.

Efforts have been made to increase the number of the visually and aurally handicapped pupils who attend normal classroom instruction. There have however, been some difficulties because of the quite insufficient measures taken to improve remedial instruction. It should be possible to arrange extra remedial instruction for visually and aurally handicapped pupils, in cases whose general remedial and classless special instruction is not sufficient.

Esperimental activities

In the school year 1977-78 the developmental and experimental activities were concentrated on the curriculum and special education measures on the senior level. The purpose was to develop a classless senior level and to arrange instruction for pupils with learning and adjustment difficulties. The experiments on the senior level have been carried on for a number of years. In the summer of 1977 the National Board

of General Education transmitted a memorandum to the local governments containing recommendations on how education of children with learning and adjustment difficulties can best be arranged on the higher comprehensive level. On the strength of this memorandum, local governments have issued instructions for the schools and other educational institutions within their districts.

THE AMOUNT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 1977-78

Unto Jero

The Special Education Bureau of the National Board of General Education has made a survey on the special education situation in Finland in all Finnish municipalities on the basis of a questionnaire mailed in the spring of 1977. The survey reveals the number of pupils attendidg Special education and the amount of special teachers by type of position.

The amount of special education in Finland can best be seen in the following statistics:

The number of pupils and teachers by the type of special education in the school year 1977-78

	Pupils		Teacher positions						Positions not filled		New position	
			gualified		unqualified		total					
All Finland		Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe
Class special education 1)												
Spec. sch.	6567	242	590	20	140	11	730	31	23	3	23	2
Obs. class	2335	23	221	2	100	1	321	3	17		10	1
Neurally handic.	443	5	40	1	11	1	51		2		4	1
Aurally handic.	428	2	52	1	10		62	1	1		8	
Visually handic.	36		4				4		1		2	
Other	60	25	5	2	2		7	2			4	
Total	9869	297	912	26	263	12	1175	38	44	3	51	3
Special ed inside regular classes												
Speech diff.	20956	200	151	2	24	1	175	3	12	1	11	
Reading diff.	22179	1155	231	5	35	9	266	14	15	2	8	
Speech. reading writing diff.	15632	922	181	6	54	13	235	19	46	4	27	4
Other	5799	450	45	7	36	8	81	15	56	6	34	1
Total	64566	2727	608	20	149	31	757	51	129	13	80	9
Part-time teaching												
Speech diff.	895	68					76	12				
Reading diff.	8170	489					607	54				
Speech, reading writing diff.	1056	39					129	4				
Math. diff.	2016	868					245	111				
Other	464	17					134	3				
Total	12601	1481					1191	184				

Class special education 9869 pupils, of whom 297 Swedish speaking

Special ed. inside regular classes	77167	"	, of whom 4208 Swedish speaking
Total	87036	"	, of whom 4505 Swedish speaking

Spec. sch. = special school
Obs. class = observation class
Handic. = handicapped
Diff. = pupils´ difficulties in each respective area

1) Special education municipalities/the total number of municipalities
Swe. The number of those speaking Swedis in the total number

It can be seen from these statistics that 13,4 per cent of Finland´s municipal compulsory school pupils receive some kind of special education.

Class special education (i.e. special school classes, observation classes, classes for the neurally handicapped or aurally/visually handicapped) was given to 1,5 per cent of all compulsory school pupils in the spring term of 1977. The number of special schools in Finland can be considered appropriate. According to the survey, approximately 90 per cent of our population is within the reach of special school services. Regardless of this 152 municipalities do not have special schools. These municipalities have small populations, which makes it impossible to found an active, competent special school. The Act on the Principles of Public Education is under change at the moment. The change provides a chance to arrange part-time special education corresponding to special schools.

Special education outside regular class instruction (speaking, reading and writing) is given to 11,9 per cent of all compulsory school pupils. The plan of the National Board of General Education supposes that special education services should primarily be given in the pupil´s own school and that the pupil´s domicile should not affect his possibility to get these services. That is why pupils should at least be given special education outside regular classes in sparsely populated areas.

These points of view should be taken into consideration when increasing the number of special education teachers. At the moment there are about 1175 class special education teachers and 757 teachers for special education outside regular instruction, but the number should be 1200 + 1200 teachers around the year 1985.

Presently the special teachers who give instruction outside regular classes, the so-called clinic teachers, have to move from one school to another daily and give instruction in several places. For instance in the northernmost county of Finland some teachers must travel as much as 600 kilometres weekly, and in the country as a whole they average almost 255 kilometres weekly.

One of the great obstacles in Finnish special education development at the moment is the shortage of teachers. According to the survey almost one fifth of the special teacher posts are taken care of by incompetent teachers. Additionally 173 special teacher posts are vacant. Special arrangements are being made to increase special teacher training. The shortage of special teachers has to some extent been cut down by increasing the training of class teachers in special education. These teachers can, beside their actual work, take care of pupils with minor learning difficulties and do this in their own schools.

The 1973 Teacher Training Committee has quite recently set up an expert work party to reorganize special education in Finland.

According to plans, future teaching will include more special services, which means that regular class teacher training should include special educational teaching contents. This is necessary because cooperation between class teaching, remedial instruction and special education could best be carried out.

SPECIAL SCHOOL, SPECIAL CLASS AND CLINIC AS ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Unto Jero

According to the Act on the Principles of Public Education the Finnish comprehensive school may include special schools and classes for children in compulsory school age. In addition, special education may be given in other ways deemed relevant.

The 1921 Act on Compulsory Education and the corresponding statute did not contain detailed regulations about municipal special education and the statute on special schools was enacted as late as the year 1952. Before that, exceptional children as a rule received instruction in the regular classes or were exempted from attending schools.

The 1957 Act on Public Education and the statute enacted in the following year, both of which are still in force, have specific provisions for special education. The regulations emphasize education given in auxiliary schools. Development in this field of special education has been rapid in this country.

Simultaneously with the creation of the auxiliary school network there was a tendency in larger communities to arrange separate schools for other exceptional groups as well, and a certain type of segregation thinking was prevalent at that time. At the moment, this kind of schools, e.g. observation schools for maladjusted, are few in number, and this type of special education is increasingly given in special classes.

We are introducing a comprehensive school system at the moment. The Act on the Principles of Public Education was passed in 1968 and the comprehensive school statute was given two years later. The development of special education has been closely connected with the comprehensive school reform in Finland. The emphasis in the development of special education in the comprehensive school is at the moment on increasing and improving clinic-type special education, remedial instruction and pupil welfare services given in connection

with a normal school and on the prevention of difficulties.

The realization of these measures presupposes a close collaboration between normal education and special education. Special education services can be distributed more evenly among different regions and special education can be organized more effectively in connection with the pupils' "own" school also in sparsely populated areas. This also means that the transportation of pupils to the municipal school centre can be reduced.

According to the comprehensive school statute, special education in clinics can be given to pupils with speech, reading and writing difficulties and to pupils suffering from other special disorders. If the planned changes in the rules and regulations are enforced, this type of special education may also be provided to mentally ratarded, mildly retarded and maladjusted pupils so that auxiliary schools and observation classes can be supplemented or replaced by corresponding clinics, or special education be given by ambulatory special teachers.

Clinic-type special education takes place either individually or in small groups in a separate clinic room or as simultaneous instruction in the normal classroom by a special teacher, who has no regular class of his own to teach.

Classless special education and concomitant education will be used firstly to help beginners but also on the upper level of the comprehensive school. The National Board of General Education has given local authorities and provincial governments detailed instructions concerning the organization of special education for these groups.

Many special teacher posts have been created after the enactment of the comprehensive school statute.

The comprehensive school statute also makes it possible to integrate special education and normal education in certain subjects. Special class pupils may be combined with corresponding comprehensive school classes in the elective and voluntary subjects at the upper level of the comprehensive school (grades 7-9) and also in other subjects, whenever it is judged feasible.

Although the trend is towards classless special education, it does not mean that special classes and schools will become redundant. Auxiliary schools and observation classes still have a role to play.

It is necessary to establish new special schools and classes either by the state or by municipality cooperation for the instruction and rehabilitation of some minority groups (severely handicapped child invalids, aurally and visually handicapped). They will, however, be located so that the pupils can, as far as possible, be transported daily to school even from great distances.

When the special education services are increased, it will be possible to "tailor" the remedial measures better to pupils´ diffuculties.

If the special education of a pupil is arranged in a regular class, it always has to be ascertained that from the point of view of the pupil´s overall rehabilitation this is a better alternative than special class placement and that adequate and sufficient remedial measures are available for him.

The question "Special school, special class or clinic?" can probably be answered so that the special education of children with various handicaps requires a large set of alternatives. There is a need for clinic instruction, special class and special school instruction and also for other support measures. Special education takes place in close cooperation with regular individually in accordance with the nature of particular difficulties.

PROVISION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL SMALL CROUPS

Elias Niskanen and Unto Jero

A planning commission for special education has estimated the number of CP-children and children with sensory handicaps in need of special education. The commission arrived at the following estimate:

CP-children c. 1.000 pupils (1.5 per 1000)
Aurally handicapped c. 1.000 pupils (1.5 per 1000)
Visually handicapped c. 500 pupils (0.8 per 1000)

The commission is of the opinion that the establishment of a special class for CP-children and aurally handicapped children presupposes a population base of c. 100.000 and for the visually handicapped c. 200.000.

Education on the aurally handicapped

Traditionally the state has provided instruction for the aurally handicapped. There are three Finnish-language and one Swedish-language boarding school. In 1972 an act and statute on municipal schools for the aurally handicapped were given. According to the regulations, the municipality may with the permission of the Ministry of Education set up a municipal school for the aurally handicapped. The school may, however, be established only if the pupil base is permanently 15 and if pupil transportation is adequately arranged. In addition, the municipality is obliged to receive pupils from other municipalities designated by the Ministry of Education. These municipalities form the catchment area of the school. It the home of an aurally handicapped child is situated within this area, he is entitled to attend the municipal school for the aurally handicapped, otherwise his education is arranged at a state boarding school or in a regular class using varicus supportive measures. Municipal schools for aurally handicapped pupils

cannot be boarding schools; the pupils are transported to and from school daily. The municipalities get state aid, which covers 95 per cent of their running costs and 90 per cent of the teachers' salaries.

In the school year 1973-74 there were 5, in 1974-75 10, and in 1977-78 already 13 municipal schools founded in accordance with the new act. Simultaneously 2 state boarding schools have been discontinued. In the school year 1978-79 a municipal school will be established in Helsinki. After this the school organization for aurally handicapped pupils will be nearly completed and the recruitment areas of municipal schools for aurally handicapped children will cover c. 60 per cent of the entire population of the country. Such aurally handicapped children as have also other handicaps and as need special rehabilitation may be transferred to a state boarding school even from a municipal school's recruitment area. In consideration of this, the responsibility for arranging education for the aurally handicapped will probably be divided equally between the state and the municipal schools.

A total of 668 pupils received instruction at state schools, municipal schools and municipal special classes for the aurally handicapped in the school year 1977-78. Some aurally handicapped children have also studied in regular classes with the aid of special supporting measures.

The education of CP-children

The education of CP-children started fairly late in Finland. The first municipal CP-classes were founded as late as the middle of the 1950's. In the spring term 1977 there were CP-classes in 21 municipalities with a total of 443 pupils. In addition, there are two boarding-school-type special schools for child invalids, which teach both CP-children and physically handicapped children. The two schools have provided special instruction annually to 240 pupils. Thus in the spring of 1977 there were 683 children in special education in classes for neurally and physically handicapped children. To this figure should be added those CP-children, who studied in other special classes or went to a normal school. Some seriously handicapped CP-children are, however, obliged to resort to home education, and they are exempted from compulsory education.

Several CP-children need a lot of other rehabilitations besides instruction. Because their instruction has been difficult to arrange, areas in sparsely populated especially the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs set up a committee towards the end of 1973 of the instruction and rehabilitation of severaly handicapped child invalids.

The committee proposed in its report that the private boarding schools for child invalids should be taken over by the state and that some new special school centres should be founded. The schools would be founded and maintained on the basis of the Invalid Act. In addition to instruction, the schools would provide adjustment training, rehabilitation and boarding. Instruction would be provided by educational authorities, rehabilitation by medical authorities and administration by social welfare authorities. The first special school centre for child invalids will be built in the town of Kuopio and it will probably be opened at the beginning of the school year 1980-81.

Those CP-children who are capable of attending regular classes or who can manage in municipal special classes would use the services of special school centres only temporarily. For this reason, more municipal CP-classes should be established and municipal cooperation should be improved so that the municipalities surrounding the CP-class municipality could utilize the services of the CP-class. The present educational legislation makes it possible to form joint special school districts for neurally handicapped children among several municipalities.

The education on the visually handicapped

At present there is one state-maintained Finnish-language special school for the visually handicapped in the town of Jyväskylä with c. 100 pupils. There is one Swedish-language school for the blind in Helsinki with 16 pupils. Besides, there is in Helsinki a special class for the partially sighted and one municipal class for the blind.

There are no plans to found new special schools or classes for visually handicapped pupils. It is intended that their education shold more commonly than before take place in regular classes.

Those teachers who have a visually handicapped child in their class are given special guidance during short courses. Such courses have been arranged at the Jyväskylä school on the initiative of the National Board of General Education. In order to make it possible for visually handicapped children to cope in normal schools and classes, the National Board of General Education has proposed that the regulations concerning remedial instruction in the comprehensive school should be changed so that visually handicapped children would get 2 weekly hours extra remedial instruction. This would be subject ot approval by the National Board of General Education. A similar arrangement would apply to severely aurally handicapped and severely physically handicapped pupils.

The studies of those visually handicapped pupils who are in regular classes are supported by the Jyväskylä special school in the form of the afore-mentioned courses and arranging teacher and pupil quidance by visiting teachers. The production and distribution of teaching materials is also arranged in Jyväskylä.

APPENDIX 1

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IN FINLAND